The Progressive Review

Nbr 288
May 1990

Health Care: America's Sick Joke

If the do-nothing wing of the Democratic Party led by Charles Robb, Sam Nunn and friends, would stop hectoring everyone to the left of *The New Republic* for a moment, they might discover two interesting phenomena. The first is that it is they, and not the people they're blaming, who have been running the party for a number of years. The second is that the power of the Democratic Party has steadily declined under their stewardship.

To be sure, they have not had presidential candidates of their liking, but in most every other respect, their crypto-Republican platform has become the dominant voice of the party, a voice that sounds more like Robert Taft than Robert Kennedy.

Their phlegmatic politics of parsimony and procrastination has not only seized the party, but has captured the media as well, the latter treating the Robb-Nunn crowd with all the dispassion of a Motley Crew fanzine. Worse, the Do-Nothings appear to be winning converts -- even such unlikely ones as Doug Wilder who, in his apparent desire to become vice president, is turning so fast to the right that he may develop inner ear problems. About the only place in Washington you'll find a gathering of a dozen elected Democrats of the Roosevelt-Truman-Kennedy-Johnson tradition is at a meeting of the Congressional Black Caucus when it has a good turnout.

The message of the Do-Nothings is essentially salvation through social sloth. It has a certain appeal, especially when you convince people that they're only entitled to what nobody has to pay for. Yet to a degree that hasn't been appreciated either by the Republicrats or the liberals they've scared, the American public appears far more ready for change then their politicians.

A major case in point is health care. Americans are clearly dissatisfied with our present health care system and are, if the polls are correct, ready for something new. For example, a *Los Angeles Times* poll recently found that 72% of all Americans would support a comprehensive national health insurance plan. That's enough to buck up even the most timid pol. Yet the strongest political response to the cries for better and cheaper health care has been the recommendations of the Pepper Commission, which turned its back on comprehensive insurance in favor of yet another attempt to patch the current way of doing things.

One observer has noted that America has developed a health system that nobody wanted. It just grew, the product of endless compromises, tinkering and stop-gap measures. As an article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* said in 1987, we have a system "in which improvement or reform is approached piecemeal" with the result that "correcting one serious problem leads to another, sometimes more serious; addressing one health care objective *** leads to slighting others." It is precisely this failed tradition that the bi-partisan Pepper Commission proposes to emulate.

It is not that the Pepper Commission's recommendations would not produce some improvements in some areas, but it leaves huge gaps with its extraordinarily mushy proposals concerning such key questions as quality assurance and cost containment. Other issues it doesn't even

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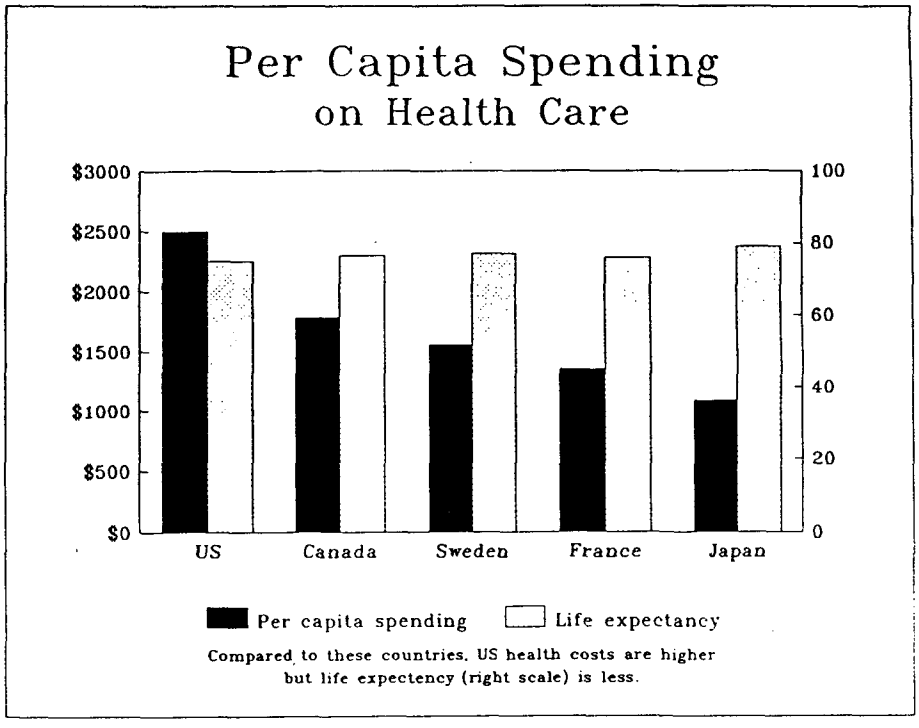

recognize, such as the great disparity in access to health facilities. In other matters, it creates new problems.

A critique of the Pepper Commission report by Dr. Jerome Liebman and Alvin Schorr, both of Case Western Reserve, brings out a number of these flaws. For example, the plan does nothing about the 1500 health insurance companies, each with different rules; does nothing to attack the maldistribution of services; does nothing to end America's multi-tier health system with its variance in service to the rich, poor and in-between; and does nothing about cost containment. It creates new administrative costs for government and business and it would require the invasion of privacy by small businesses seeking to determine the means classification of their employees. Because it does not entirely replace Medicaid, it creates an additional public program that must be coordinated with existing ones. And it ignores the employment realities of the population it attempts to serve. This population works in jobs with high turnover and is subject to frequent spells of unemployment. Liebman and Schorr note, "This means an employee would barely get covered, when he or she would move to another employer or to coverage by the public program. It does not seem likely that the administrative apparatus would be able to move quickly enough to certify coverage under this series of insurers."

Read between the lines and you realize that what the Pepper Commission has suggested is what Paul Soglin, former mayor of Ann Arbor, used to call lemon socialism: the government gets everything private industry doesn't want.

According to the same poll mentioned above, the American people would buy such a plan but it has 6 percentage points less support than a full insurance system. In other words, the more radical system is more popular than the compromise.

Of course, politicians have a lot more to worry about than mere voters, and in this case the rules of the game are that the public will get as good a

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health system as the insurance companies and the American Medical Association will tolerate.

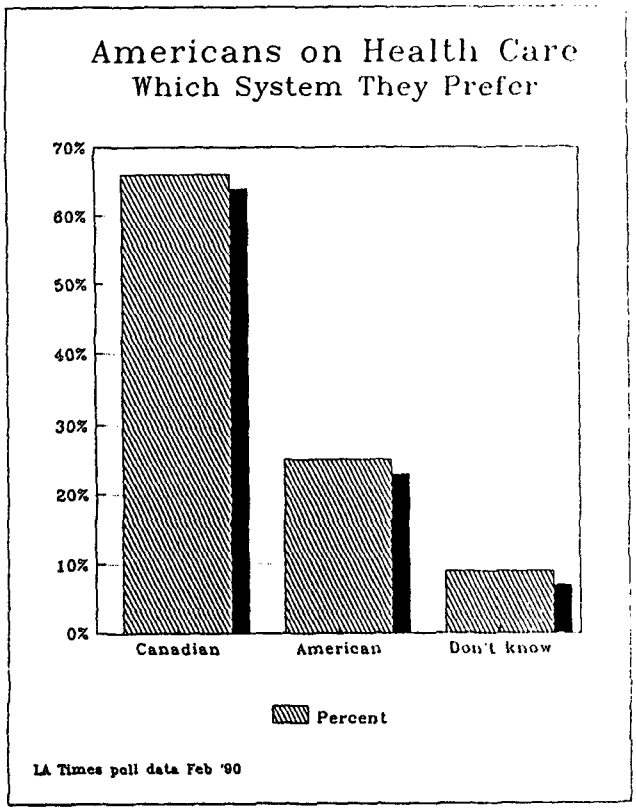
This is not only morally pathetic, it is a political issue dying for an advocate. Yet the overwhelming attitude in Washington, as the ward leader said of Chicago, is that America "ain't ready for reform."

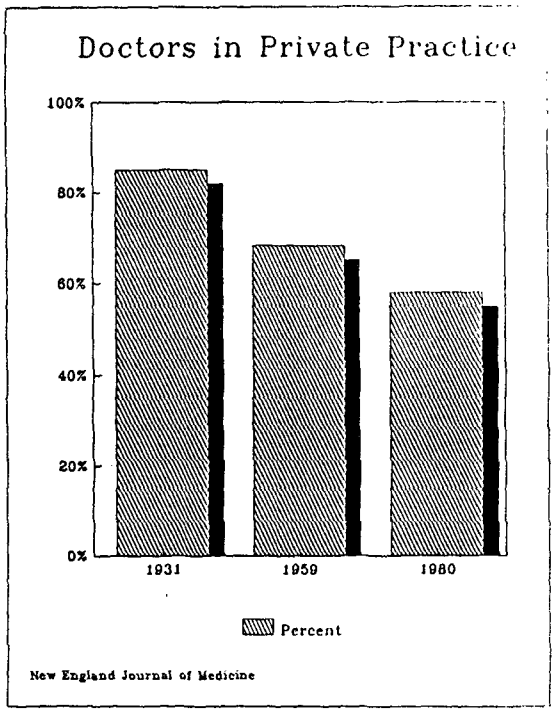
Canada's way

While dissatisfaction with our health system is rampant, most Canadians like theirs. While 37 million Americans lack health insurance, all Canadians get it. While we spend about $2400 a person for health care, Canada's system costs two-thirds as much. Nearly nine percent of American health costs go to cover administrative expenses; the Canadians need less than 3%. Canadians live longer and have less infant mortality. When the *LA Times* described the Canadian plan to pollees, 66% picked it over the 25% who preferred the American system.

The Canadian insurance plan, established in 1971, guarantees health care to all citizens. Fees are set by the government after negotiation with hospitals and doctors. The plan covers doctor visits, psychiatry, all hospital costs, and home and nursing care. Individual provinces may, and do, supplement the plan with coverage for such items as prescription drugs, dental care and cosmetic surgery.

The system is, among its other attributes, simple. For example, Victor Stoughton, head of Toronto General Hospital, told *The Boston Globe*





recently, "We negotiate a year's budget with the government, and we receive 24 checks a year to run the hospital. We don't fill out bills for anybody -- not the patient, not the government." Stoughton estimates that in terms of patient care operating costs he could run two Toronto Generals for the price of one Massachusetts General.

Going all the way

Good as the Canadian system is, Liebman and Schorr see important problems with it, not the least of which is the failure of the Canadian plan to deal with the maldistribution of medical service. It is for such reasons that they are leading advocates of a full national health service. A version of their plan, was endorsed by Americans for Democratic Action last year.

The proposal calls for a complete restructuring of the health care system based on three levels of facilities. At the core would be about 150 major medical centers dealing with teaching, research and complex care. Normal hospitals would comprise the second level, each attached to a major center. Similarly, the third level -- doctors' offices, community clinics and so forth -- would be associated with one of the hospitals. Patients would get to choose their own doctor.

Under such a proposal, doctors and other health workers would have access to their major medical center or hospitals, by computers and other electronic means, for tests and technical assistance. They would also use the centers for training purposes.

Further, the plan calls for the creation of a transportation wing, similar to that found in

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Australia, so that every citizen -- no matter how far from a major center or hospital -- would be assured access.

The proposal notes that "it would be wise to have to have each health unit, from the primary care center to the largest national administrative unit in Washington, to be in the hands of a board of control, with each board to include health workers, administrators, and patients."

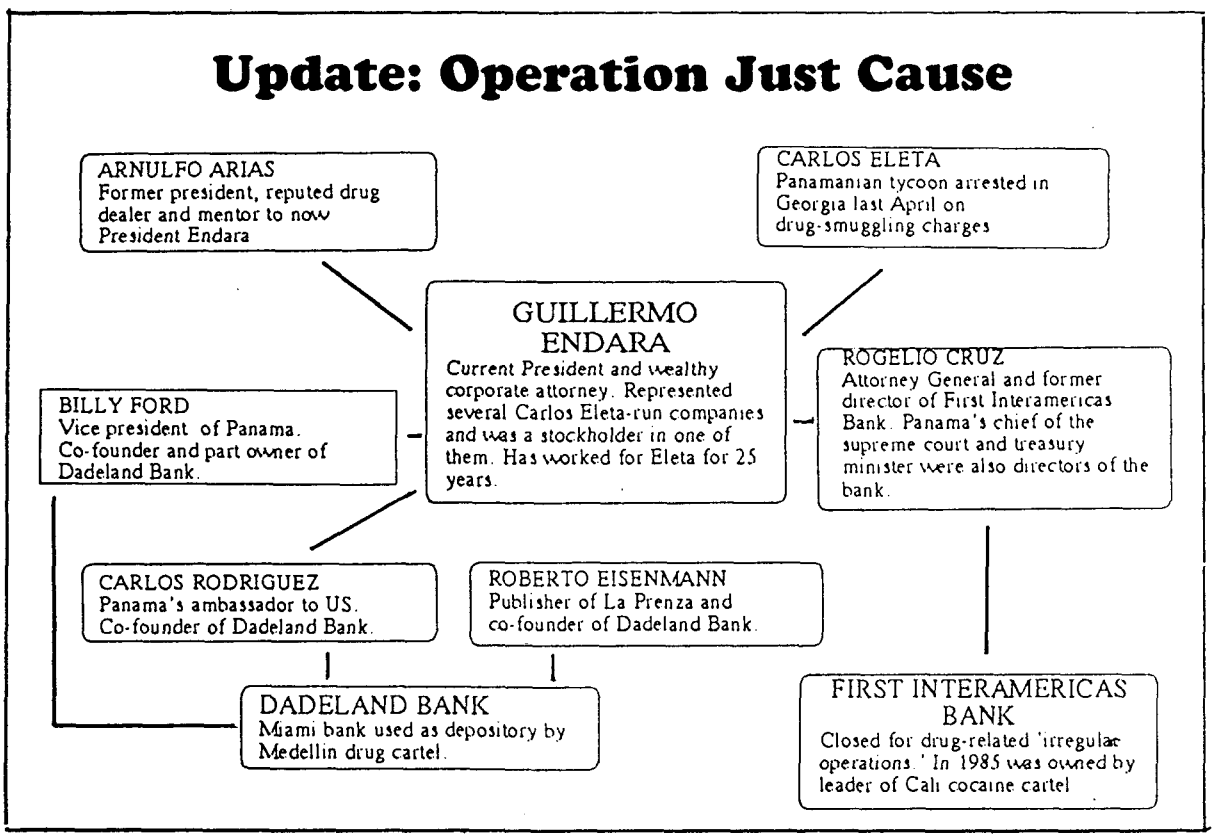
One of the classic arguments against a national health system is the damage it might do to the patient-doctor relationship and the loss of control by the individual doctor. Yet the fact is that, in their effort to avoid government control, doctors find themselves working in a system with just as much bureaucracy, run instead by insurance companies. Physicians in the US actually have more paperwork than their Canadian or British counterparts. Further, doctors themselves have been silently voting on the matter. In 1931, 86% of all physicians were in private practice. Today it is only 58%. Young doctors are now almost three times as likely to receive salaries as older doctor, thanks to the growth of group and corporate medicine.

A national health system or a national health insurance plan would not have to reduce doctors' fees. In Canada, for example, doctors earned an average gross income of $110,000. While this is a lower gross than in America, doctors here have much higher costs, resulting in a comparable net income. A big difference is that Canadian doctors don't have to worry about huge malpractice awards.

The ADA proposal, written by Liebman, lists ten key elements of any sound health plan. These include

o Fair financing
o Total coverage
o Cost control
o Quality control
o An adequate number of workers
o Preventive and environmental care.
o Rational organization
o Balanced control of the system by patients, providers and health administrators
o Freedom of choice

To a greater or lesser extent these elements are missing from both the current system and that proposed by the Pepper Commission. Either the Liebman plan or Canada's insurance plan would make far more sense. And despite what the Do-Nothing Democrats might have you believe, a large number of Americans would agree. -- *Sam Smith*


Update: Operation Just Cause
ARNULFO ARIAS
Former president, reputed drug dealer and mentor to now President Endara
CARLOS ELETA
Panamanian tycoon arrested in Georgia last April on drug-smuggling charges
GUILLERMO ENDARA
Current President and wealthy corporate attorney. Represented several Carlos Eleta-run companies and was a stockholder in one of them. Has worked for Eleta for 25 years.
BILLY FORD
Vice president of Panama. Co-founder and part owner of Dadeland Bank.
ROGELIO CRUZ
Attorney General and former director of First Interamericas Bank. Panama's chief of the supreme court and treasury minister were also directors of the bank.
CARLOS RODRIGUEZ
Panama's ambassador to US. Co-founder of Dadeland Bank.
ROBERTO EISENMANN
Publisher of La Prenza and co-founder of Dadeland Bank.
DADELAND BANK
Miami bank used as depository by Medellin drug cartel.
FIRST INTERAMERICAS BANK
Closed for drug-related 'irregular operations.' In 1985 was owned by leader of Cali cocaine cartel

The chart above is based on information in the Oakland Tribune *(Jan 1, 22), which published one of the rare stories about the drug connections of the new government of Panama. Wrote Jonathan Marshall: "President Endara's appointments read like a who's who of Panama's oligarchy. Many have personal or business associations with the drug-money laundering industry."*

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Solving the South Africa Puzzle

Thomas S. Martin

The freeing of Nelson Mandela and the legalization of the African National Congress have been celebrated throughout the world by the enemies of racism and *apartheid*. The celebration, however, is premature. Recent events in South Africa do not constitute real change; they represent a mere jockeying for position. For decades white South Africans have been talking about "when the crunch comes," and surely most recognize that the current trend, encouraging as it may appear, means that "the crunch." is upon them.

President F.W. de Klerk's scheme for "separate development" is a smokescreen for the continuation of *apartheid* and white supremacy. De Klerk envisions a loosely federated South Africa made up of black homelands, "group areas" for Coloureds and Asians, and wealthy white enclaves. The president and his Nationalist Party insist that the "one person, one vote" democracy demanded by the nonwhite majority would produce chaos and collapse. As he recently told Parliament: "Our strong emphasis on group rights is based on the reality of South Africa and not on an ideological obsession or racial prejudice. All the lip service being paid to a so-called nonracial society is pure nonsense." What de Klerk intends, of course, is that most of the blacks and coloured will be herded into the tiny, fragmented homelands, and that the greater part of South Africa will become a whites-only nation. Naturally the nonwhites will be permitted to commute to their low-status jobs in white areas, as they do now.

Ironically, de Klerk and his racist colleagues have hit on the only real solution to the South African conundrum. They are correct in believing that "one person, one vote" would result in the inundation and extinction of white South African civilization. Their claim that the various groups are too culturally diverse for peaceful assimilation is also accurate. But a free, just and democratic society in South Africa can only be achieved by going two steps beyond de Klerk's blueprint. South Africa must be partitioned into at least a dozen smaller states, but they must be fully sovereign, perhaps confederated like the members of the European Community, but independent. And no more than thirteen percent of the territory must be allocated to the whites. There are only two other alternatives. The present arrangement could continue, but that would be intolerable and dangerous. Or the black majority could take power, creating the long-awaited "Azania" but dispossessing the whites. That might be just, but hardly fair. The whites are Africans too; some have been there for three centuries or more. If they must leave South Africa, then white and black Americans must also hand this country back to the Indians. In any case, majority rule would merely exchange one set of rivalries for another. Even now, violence is escalating between various tribes, regions and black political organizations.

The partition or cantonization of sovereignty in South Africa has received scant attention from the world media because the idea (in diluted form) has been proposed by the same folks who brought us *apartheid* and the Sharpeville massacre. Support for the breakup of South Affrica is equated with support for white racism. But this need not be the case, if the new black states receive a share of the territory in proportion to their population. The place to start is with the black homelands, better known to their detractors as "Bantustans." These ten enclaves, first proposed in 1959 by the Bantu Self-Government Act, were presented as a way of granting autonomy and freedom to the major tribal groups within South Africa. In fact their purpose was to serve as reservations, dumping-grounds for *apartheid* in which black could be isolated and deprived of their South African citizenship. Four of the ten have now achieved "independence," but are recognized by no other government. Most are very small and fragmented, and occupy poor, unproductive land. They are entirely dependent economically on white South Africa, and their leaders are widely viewed as Uncle Tom-ish puppets. A majority of their "citizens" have not yet been cajoled or coerced into moving "home." Observers both within and outside South Africa have unanimously declared that the homelands are not viable, but the government remains committed to the idea.

But the homeland policy, racist as it may be, contains the germ of a solution. Take the sad case of Bophuthatswana, "independent" since 1977. This embryonic nation was created as a homeland for the Tswana, a widely scattered tribe which also controls neighboring Botswana. Bophuthatswana consists of six discontinous, landlocked enclaves in the Transvaal and northern Cape Province, a total of 17,000 square miles. About two million people live there, mostly in poverty; this is well under half the total number of Tswana, whose true homeland is elsewhere. Many scrape out a living on the dry land, while others commute to work in Johannesburg, Pretoria or the Witwatersrand gold fields. But Bophuthatswana contains an unknown quantity of platinum reserves, and could be expanded to include the coal, copper, asbestos, nickel and chromium mines north of Johannesburg, and perhaps the city itself. A viable Bophuthatswana would include much of the present Transvaal and could also support itself with cattle and sheep ranching. Eventually the Tswana might choose to merge with their kinspeople in Botswana.

Of course this is only one of many possible arrangements, and any change must be carried out democratically and nonviolently. The myriad problems involved in expanding Bophuthatswana to a workable size are multiplied tenfold when we look at the other nine homelands: Venda, Gazankulu, KwaZulu, Transkei, Ciskei, QwaQwa, Lebowa, KaNgwane, and KwaNdebele. Each, however, has potential; though some should probably be annexed to Lesotho or Swaziland. The Cape Province south of the Orange River should also become independent. Its population is nearly three-quarters "coloured," and it presents the most likely opportunity for developing a multiracial society on the model of Zimbabwe. This leaves most of the Orange Free State for a "white nation." The disposition of the major cities will requrie special and delicate attention. The Asians are more than 80% urban, and predominate in no area. Though also victims of *apartheid*, they would probably not

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choose to give up their economically privileged position in the cities

The devolution of South Africa could work only under a prior agreement by all parties that each new state would discriminate against no racial group, and that each South African would be free to take out citizenship in any of the devolved nations. The ludicrously complex race-classification laws would be abolished everywhere. No doubt most people would choose to live in states dominated by their own group, but this must not be a requirement. The experience of Transkei could serve as a model. Both whites and blacks hold full citizenship, and though there is some segregation, Transkei has government officials of both races.

Of course the partition would create immense, if transitory, problems. Several million people of all races would be uprooted, and the logistics of the ensuing mass migration would be a nightmare. A similar situation in 1947 resulted in a bloodbath when India and Pakistan were partitioned. Naturally, no one would be forced to move. Those who choose to migrate should be able to sell their property at fair market value, guaranteed by the local government. Capital and other property could be swapped to achieve economic balance and viability, though undeniably, economic parity among the new states will be difficult to achieve. An interstate agreement should protect the right to commute to a job in another state, at least until each homeland becomes self-sufficient. The actual boundaries should be drawn by an outside authority. preferably the United Nations; and everyone should agree that those borders are subject to future adjustment as the new order sorts itself out.

But the greatest challenge to a democratic South Africa has been, and will be, public and international acceptance of whatever solution is eventually adopted. The establishment media assumes, like its masters, that national boundaries are sacred and that sovereignty is not to be screwed around with. The press frequently uses word like "balkanization" to subtly prejudice us against any notion of devolution or the breaking-up of nations. This will have to be overcome. But if it can be, South Africa might well become a prototype for similar processes elsewhere. Practically every border in modern Africa is the result of decisions made at colonial offices in London or Paris, and most cut arbitrarily across ethnic and linguistic lines. All need to be redrawn. The same is true to a lesser extent in the Soviet Union, southern Asia and parts of Latin America. South Africa today has a unique opportunity to change its image from quasifascis anachronism to the cutting edge of twenty-first century "politics with a human face."

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Flotsam & Jetsam

The Nintendo Generation

I recently spent a weekend in a house occupied in no small part by an eight-year-old and a Nintendo set. Having had no eight-year-olds around the house for some time, I had ample excuse for ignoring what those to whom we will pass the torch were about. Nonetheless, it was a mistake. If my weekend sample is any indication, a new America is arising in darkened living rooms and arcades throughout the land that will shape the course of our history as much as perestroika or the downfall of Drexel Burnham.

Since I don't really understand what is going on, I shall simply report what I have found and let the reader determine what a new elite of the digitally dextrous means for human society as we know it.

Nintendo is an outgrowth of what we, in simpler and happier times, referred to as Atari games. Atari is still around, as is a third competitor named Sega, but as my informant noted: "I know some people who have Atari, Sega, and Nintendo but nobody plays Atari even if they have it." According to newspaper reports, Nintendo was the most popular Christmas request of any sort by American children. A recently released game, 'Super Mario Bros 3', sold 700,000 copies in a month. One bereft mother claims to have driven 200 miles searching in 20 stores for a copy.

To give some idea of the advance in video game technology, the strategy for the game Tetris, a relatively simple spin-off of the Nintendo era, takes ten pages to describe in a recent issue of *Nintendo Power,* the bi-monthly Bible of Nintendo afficienados. Tetris involves a series of geometric shapes that descend from the top of the screen onto a wall at the bottom. One attempts to build a solid horizontal line of bricks by sliding, turning and twisting these shapes at the appropriate moment. When successful the reward is a higher score and a pleasant cacophony of computer noises combined with a partial collapse of the wall. When unsuccessful, the shapes pile up on the wall and as they do so their successors fall with increasing velocity and perversity until the wall fills the screen and the dreaded words *Game Over!* appear.

By Nintendo standards, it's a piece of cake. No mutant turtles, double dragons, nerve centers, Vo.H Stages, surprise jaders, heat waves, dragon breaths, wraith chambers, rope rooms, fire bridges, haunted islands, thirteen levels of experience, specters, terstorms, statues of unknown agents, acro circuses, and so forth with which to contend. In fact, Tetris doesn't even make the list of the 25 players' favorite games according to *Nintendo Power.*

Therefore it is humiliating to report that the highest score I was able to achieve in Tetris in my first forays was 780. By comparison, my eight-year-old advisor had a personal best in the neighborhood of 48,000.

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He tried to be reassuring, pointing out that "basically, the only reason" adults did so poorly was because "Nintendo wasn't around when adults were young. You really have to be born at the right time to like it."

But on reflection he added, "Say you're 60 years old and you suddenly get Nintendo. It'll probably take you five years to learn it. But if you were 12 it would only take 2 or 1 years." Besides, he noted, "You don't come home from work and go to an arcade, do you?" I agreed that was not my usual pattern.

Yet if our relative abilities are in any way typical, it suggests that one's potential for the game regresses at a rate of approximately 1000 points a year. (My informant's father challenges this with certain unverified claims concerning his own skill but, like *Nintendo Power,* I shall await a photograph of his winning game before I believe him.)

Age is not the only disparity upon which Nintendo feasts. It is also clearly a boys' game. Given the substantial attention given to ending subtle distinctions by sex in child-rearing it is remarkable that a generation of feminist mothers has not noted this and done something about it. My informant tells me that for girls, "Nintendo is a word that's not even in their vocabulary." And a study of the list of recent Nintendo high scorers in *NP* finds only about 8% being names of girls or women as the case may be, although most likely the former. Further, over half of the winners come from only seven states, with California alone taking 17% of the trophies.

You may say that it is only a game (or more precisely a complex of dozens of games). But one can not read the 100 graphic-packed pages of *NP* without an uneasy sense that this corporation is up to something far more. As my advisor pointed out: "The brain is very big in Nintendo." And if one disregards the ultimate mindlessness of the objective being taught, *NP* is at its core a highly sophisticated curriculum, teaching young minds how to deal with confict, complexity, and rapidly changing events. In other words, your average world of tomorrow. *Nintendo Power* could, in fact, be a model for any school system wallowing in dispair over the failure of its current efforts. Put Kierkegaard in the costume of a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle under the direction of the software team at Nintendo and every kid in America could understand him.

Most particularly *NP* is preparing young Americans for a world dominated by computers and computer thinking. The magazine mimics adult publications, including a feature called *Counselor's Corner* which deals with such issues as "How do I pass the dancing Japanese zombies in level five?" -- no small feat especially when you think of the amount of unsuccessful effort Washington puts into figuring out how to pass sitting Japanese politicians at level one.

Another page describes in some detail the making of "Mario Bros. 3." Keeping in mind that we are talking about a children's publication, consider this excerpt:

A tool that makes this procedure easier is the Character Generator Computer Aided Design (CCGAD) machine. Using this computer, designs can create 'character banks' which contain the graphic shapes used to draw images during game play. Each shape is given a number which the NES can use to access the shape and combine it into a complete image. A NES game program consists entirely of numerical data strings for doing the the graphics of the game...

Forget about porn, did you know your kids were reading this stuff?

Perhaps most striking is the personality profile -- in this issue up close and personal with Shigeru Miyamoto who is not a Japanese hunk or rock star, but a pleasantly nerdy looking gentleman in white shirt and tie among whose claims to fame is the fact that he invented Donkey Kong in 1980, the first big success of Nintendo.

This novel role model for the young has a BA in industrial design and likes to listen to bluegrass. "A typical working day for Mr. Miyamoto starts at a flexible time in the morning and sometimes lasts until the wee hours of the morning. During a typical day he will check on the six or seven software projects for which he supervising development..."

Parents might have some problems with a culture hero proud of the "dastardly, fascinating and repulsive enemy characters" he has created, but the case might be made that Nintendo will prove the ideal outlet for aggression in post-perestroika America. One indulgent father tells me that the games have a combination of silliness and sadism that appeals to the national pysche.

Those concerned about Japanese-American competition, however, would do well to turn their minds from trade barriers to Terra Cresta and Twin Cobra. One cannot peruse *NP* without a sense that a second front is being opened here. Are we, in fact, reading a training manual for future colonial administrators?

I probed my informant for incipient jingoism, but he was unconcerned and cautiously optimistic that "Americans could put out something that good." It was just that "Japan started it first." In any case, the American spirit is not totally moribund; a nine-year-old boy in Bridgeport, Conn., has filed a a class action suit against Nintendo of America charging that 'Major League Baseball,' a Nintendo-licensed product, fails to provide sufficient data to allow one to make the managerial decisions promised and that there is no way to verify the statistics included in the game. He wants his $40 back.

There is no moral in all this except that change sometimes comes when we're not looking. Nintendo has considerable potential to affect the course of employment choices, inter-sex relationships, and international affairs, but because it's only a game, people who study things that matter haven't given it much attention. They probably should. It may be the beginning of Nintendo and not the end of history that truly shapes the world. Besides there is evidence that the Nintendo gestalt is infiltrating adult values as well. Egghead Software is offering a simple software program called The Boss Key. Its function is to turn off the game on one's computer when the boss enters the office. People appear to be buying it. -- *Sam Smith*

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FIELD NOTES

Institute for Social Ecology: Now in its 16th year of operation, ISE offers a variety of summer programs including: design and sustainable communities, ecology and community, women and community development, and a MA program in social ecology. *ISE, PO Box 89, Plainfield, VT 05667 [802-454-8493]*

20/20 Vision: This organization has come up with a neat way that people with little time or money can actually influence events. By contributing $20 and spending 20 minutes a month writing a letter to a public official on a common topic, even the most overworked citizen can remain active. The topics are chosen by core groups around the country and a fact sheet is provided for each topic. *20/20 Vision, 1000 16th NW #810, DC 20036. [202-728-1157]*

SLAPP Facts: The Institute for Local Self Reliance has put out a useful fact sheet on strategic lawsuits against public participation, or SLAPPs, which are a new way corporations are dealing with citizen protests. The corporations don't even need to bring the case to trial to win; it is simply enough to file the case to tie up citizen groups, scare off contributors and demoralize opposition. With their immense legal resources, these corporations, such as power utilities, have a strong hand against the activists. In order to prevent this harassment, courts are going to have to establish the right of citizens to petition in these cases *without* the threat of lawsuits. *Institute for Local Self Reliance, 2425 18th St NW, DC 20009. [202-232-4108]*

National Endowment for Democracy: A Foreign Policy Branch Gone Awry: A report examining in detail this agency that has served as a major mechanism for US meddling in hemispheric affairs. *$8.95 plus 15% postage and handling. Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, Box 4506, Albuquerque NM 87196 [505-842-8288].*

The Bluegrass Conspiracy: This book reads like a thriller but it's all too true. An account of murder, sex, drug running, corruption, and arms smuggling centered in Kentucky over a decade. Those involved included a governor, high society types, a regional Drug Enforcement Administration director, the FBI, CIA and NSA, and a number of ex-cops turned drug traffickers aided by current cops and politicians who were just corrupt. Nothing we've read has so well illustrated how America's drug policy has gone completely haywire. *By Sally Denton. Doubleday. $19.95*

Anti-strikebreaking bills: Sen. Howard Metzenbaum and Rep. William Clay have introduced bills that would ban the permanent replacement of striking workers during a a labor dispute and prohibit discrimination against striking workers returning to their jobs once the dispute has been settled.

The Other Economic Summit: TOES meets each year at the same time and in the same city as the world economic summit. From 1984 to 1989, TOES has attempted to send the message that economics as usual is destroying the planet and its people. In its meetings, events and discussions, it has given a voice to the unheard. This year, TOES will be held in Houston, Texas, Jul 6-8 and will include a further emphasis on democratic renewal. Populist leaders from around the world have been invited. *TOES, c/o Larry Martin, 1442 Harvard St NW, DC 20009 [202-667-4659]*

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The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty will be holding their 1990 Spring Fundraiser on June 8th at 8:00 p.m. This year's event, a theater night, will take place the STUDIO THEATRE in Washington DC. The Studio will feature the play, "Frankie and Johnny in the Clare de Lune," a comedy/love story. A late-nite buffet at Herb's Restaurant will follow the production. Donations for the evening start at $50.00. For more information contact: Michelle Smith, (202) 797-7090.

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The Weather Report

Good-bye yuppies?

The National Student News Service cites several reports that suggest an increasing desire by college students to find jobs that fit their social and political values. Personnel directors in pubic interest organizations report record numbers of applications from students seeking non-traditional full-time and summer positions. The American Council on Education says that the number of students wanting to "participate in community action programs" has grown five percent since 1986 and those looking for environmental programs have grown ten percent. Greenpeace reports applications up 18%, Clean Water Action expects to hire 30% more students this year.

Why Mario won't go to hell

Given the paucity of leadership in the Democratic Party we were concerned to hear, via a certain New York bishop, that Mario Cuomo might go to hell for his views on abortion. It appears, however, that the cleric overstated the case. Daniel E. McGuire, a professor of moral theology at Marquette University, rose to the governor's defense in an op-ed piece in the *New York Times*. The good Jesuit cited a number of historical precedents that are worth repetition for those finding themselves embroiled in the theological aspects of this issue:

The Augustine/Aquinas defense: Both these gentlemen argued that prostitution, while repugnant, should be legalized for the better good of society. Says McGuire: "A privately held moral view should not be imposed, they argued, if imposing it would do more harm than good. If it cannot be enforced, they said, it creates chaos and underminds respect for the law. *** Thomas Aquinas wryly suggested that a good legislator should imitate God, who presumably could eliminate evil but does not do so for the sake of the greater common good."

In the 15th century, Catholic ethics allowed early abortion to save a woman's life. In the 16th century, the right to abortion was expanded to include lesser reasons based on the woman's *jus prius,* or prior right, in these situations.

The Non-Person Defense: Throughout most of Christian history early embryos and fetuses have not been given the status of a person, witness the refusal to baptize in a miscarriage or abortion or to allow a Christian burial.

To those seeking secular arguments, we would add the HOV 3 Defense proposed by Eugene McCarthy. To test this out, drive with a pregnant woman on Route 66 during rush hour and see whether the State of Virginia recognizes the fetus as a person for the purposes of vehicle occupancy.

Furthermore. . .

A Government Accounting Office report on 28 studies done on the death penalty says that people who murder whites are more likely to get the death penalty. The GAO said the race of the victim was influential at all stages of prosecution. The report also said that the studies were "equivocal" on whether the race of the accused was significant... Meanwhile, another study finds that one quarter of all young black men in America are in jail or under criminal supervision. That's over 600,000 men and is almost 50% higher than the number of black men enrolled in higher education.

Patricia Axelrod, a consultant to the families of those killed in the *USS Iowa* explosion, suggests that the Navy should be looking at electromagnetic radiation as a likely cause of the blast. Because of the mass of electronic gear aboard a ship, static electricity can easily build up and, in fact, has been responsible for the most the Navy's big gun bag charge accidents since the beginning of WWII.

The Census Bureau reports that most Americans like their homes and neighborhoods -- about seven out of ten respondents to a survey on the subject. More than a third gave perfect grades to their local surroundings. Black housholders were only slightly less enthusiastic.

The ever-solemn *Columbia Journalism Review* took full journalistic disclosure to extravagant extremes in a recent issue. By-lining a story "By William Boot," the

Drug Busts

Treatment works

The National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors reported recently that drug "treatment has been tragically undervalued and underfunded *** at great cost to our nation. Currently only about 25% of federal drug money is being spent on treatment, education and prevention. The association stated: "Fifteen years of research provides overwhelming proof that treatment is one of the few reliable weapons in attacking the problem." The group, which says that only one person in eight who needs treatment is getting it, adds that for every dollar we spend on treatment we save $11 in social costs.

Needle exchanges works

While intravenous drug users are major contributors to the spread of AIDS in the US, a study done in Sidney, Australia, found only 3.5% of them with HIV infection. One difference: New South Wales has been operating a needle exchange program since 1986. The state government commissioned a study by an independent research firm and found that the program has been outstanding and should be extended. Meanwhile, New York City has closed down its only needle exchange program.

Drug war doesn't

The March 28 issue of *USA Today* reported that there is so much cocaine on American streets that midlevel dealers in this country have started exporting the stuff to Europe. *USAT* also cites an internal Drug Enforcement Administration report that says the war on drugs has failed to cut the supply of cocaine.

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magazine then added an editorial note explaining that "William Boot is the pen name of Christopher Hanson, Washington correspondent for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*."

A computer simulation at the University of Maryland's Center for Ocean-Land-Atmosphere Interactions suggests that the continued rapid destruction of the Amazon rain forest may cause irreversible climate changes that could make reforestation impossible. Right now about 14,000 square miles of forest are being lost each year. Ultimately this will raise temperatures and lower rainfall to such an extent that reforestation won't work.

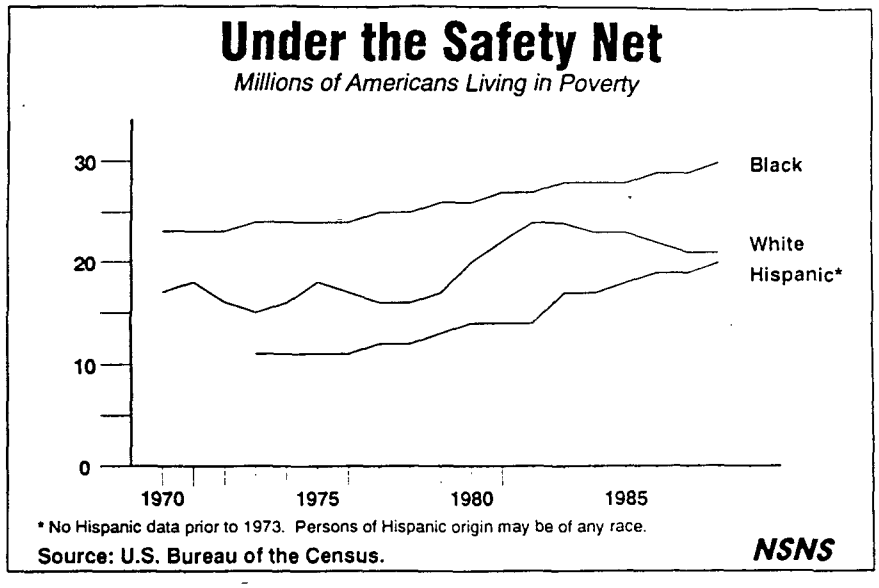
The new mayor of Cracow, Poland, is the first Green Party mayor of a large city in Europe.

The Metropolitan Board of Trade reports that Washington has more than three times as many lawyers as all of Japan. The greater Washington area now has about 9% of all lawyers in America.

One more note on the Mencken flap, thanks to Sheldon Richman in the *Washington Journalism Review*. He points out that Mencken wrote a letter home from Germany in 1922 warning of a "colossal massacre of Jews." In 1939, in the *Baltimore Evening Sun*, that "Either we are willing to give refuge to the German Jews or we are not willing. If the former, then here is one vote for bringing them in by the first available ships. *** The initiative should be taken by the so-called Christians who are now so free with weasel words of comfort and flattery, and so curiously stingy with practical aid [and by the] political mountebanks who fill the air with hollow denounciations of Hitler, and yet never lift a hand to help and actual Jew."

Although the media appears to think otherwise, the invasion of Panama isn't over. Monsignor Sebastian Laboa now regrets his role as intermediary between Manuel Noriega and the occupying US forces, comparing the latter to those of Franco, and describing the current US activities in the country as the "substitution of one dictatorship for another." What's got the monsignor upset are US Army dragnets that in one six-hour example, arrested 319 men, women and children.

Public Citizen says that the licensing of the Seabrook nuclear reactor was a pyrrhic victory for the nuclear industry. According to PC, "No utility will ever again be willing to wisk the high economic costs, the bad public relations, and the protracted political fight necessary to bring a nuclear power plant on line." It took Seabrook 18 years, 50 lawsuits, the arrest of 2500 protestors and a cost 12 times the original estimate.



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